25: Brodrick--98-99 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 779, 782, 792, 872

"...the framework of Little Vehicle Buddhism looks much the same as in the land of the Khmers. There are the saffron-robes, but the bonzes are sturdier and less composed than in Cambodia. When the monks do their rounds with their begging-bowls, the holy men do not hesitate to look women in the face, to speak with them and even to touch their hands. The Laotian bonzes are not the less Laotian for being bonzes, and by no means all of them observe strictly the precepts of their Order. In fact, some of them are [99] a little loose of conduct. Again, the Buddhist hierarchy in the Laos is almost more sacerdotal than monastic, and, in the public estimation, the bonze is more or less of a priest, that is, a man performing efficacious and quasi-magical ceremonies. There are temple-schools, as in Cambodia, Siam and Burma. In these schools the male population learns to read and write in the complicated Laotian script that is rather derived from Siamese than from Cambodian. The same moral obligations are supposed to constrain the monks. The offerings at the pagoda services are just fragrant frangipani flowers, candles and incense. There is no such divergence from Little Vehicle practice as would make of Laotian Buddhism a new religion such as is the Lamaism of Tibet. But everything is a little distorted, vague, misty, if we will. The alien religion is subjected to a strong push from beneath and is transmuted by an all-pervading atmosphere of nonchalance and good humour."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

slaughterers are obliged to work by flares, which is responsible, the 253
French think, for an unusually picturesque effect. It is 'not done' to 825
go along while the actual killing is in progress, but shortly after, when the carcasses are suspended from hooks to be cut up, and the workers, stripped to their loincloths, and garishly splashed, paddle about in a vermilion sea. Cars are stationed just beyond the reach of the steaming odours, and one is recommended to see the thing as one views a nude in a picture gallery – that is, divorced from all but a disinterested abstraction, in this case the colour.

The possibilities of Vientiane, it was clear, would be quickly 292
exhausted. Thao Nhouy, the Laotian Minister of Education, lent 301
me his jeep to see some of the surrounding villages, but the roads 335
were so appalling that it broke down after being driven for about five miles. He then suggested that I might like to see the local schoolgirls dancing, and when I said that I would be delighted, and asked for permission to take photographs, the girls were sent off home, on their bicycles, to get their best clothes. An hour or two later they began to trickle back, wearing their mothers' jewellery as well as their own and with their silk finery done up in paper parcels. When they had dressed and were ready they made a glittering sight. One girl wore a scarf ornamented with real gold thread said to be worth about £50 in English money. They danced under the supervision of a teacher whom I recognized as a professional actor, from the *boun*,[1] and who occasionally intervened when a girl failed in some minor feat, such as bending her fingers back at an expressive ninety degrees from the palm.

All these girls, dressed as they were like princesses, came from 493
shacks in the forest. Each one had a bicycle – infallibly fitted with 511
dynamo lighting, and sometimes 3-speed gears. It seems that a bicycle for his daughter is one of the essentials for which a Laotian will work. It is considered ill-bred and irreligious in Laos to work 241
more than is necessary. The father of a family cultivates an amount 461
of land, estimated, by a bonze who is expert in such matters, to be 511
792 ●

[1] [i.e., Laotian religious festival. --Analyst] 255

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
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sufficient for his requirements. If there are six members of the family, six standard, equal sized portions of land will be cultivated. If a child is born into the family another piece of land is cleared and worked. When a member of the family dies, whether it be a baby or the grandfather, cultivation of his portion will be stopped. Just enough is produced for the family to eat and to provide a small surplus sold in the market — *with the bonze's approval* — to buy occasional strict necessities, like a silk shawl and a bicycle for the daughter. There is no social insurance and there are no poor. The old and the sick are supported by the young, or, where they are left without able-bodied providers, by the community, and the bonzes give instructions for the necessary land to be placed under cultivation for them. The accumulation of wealth which is not to be used for definite, approved purposes, causes a man to lose prestige among his neighbours, just, as in the West, the process is reversed. The main difference, it seems, between Buddhism in Indo-China, and Christianity — apart from any question as to their relative merits — is that, whether we admire it or not, the former is largely put into practice.

It is a stimulating reflection that the Western millionaire, obsessed for the sake of social distinction with the amassing of enormous possessions — little of which he can personally consume — would attain the same ends of personal celebrity under a Laotian Buddhistic order of things by his priestly austerities — by embracing the most abject and prestige-conferring form of poverty.

For this reason perhaps the local Evangelist missionary and his wife have made no converts. Like all who have lived among the Laotians they are charmed with them — although, of course, disappointed at their blindness. They also deplore their immorality.

In the matter of converts the Evangelists have been no more unsuccessful than their Portuguese, Spanish and French forerunners. The Laotians having little capacity for abstractions, either in their

victorious (1), and this expedition, which would seem to have 648* 643* 728 175* been imposed on him, is the only campaign which is related during his long forty-three year reign.

According to the Annals he strictly observed the Buddhist teaching and followed, in a more docile manner than his father had done, the pious counsels of Pha-Maha-Pasaman-Thala-Tiao, his spiritual director, "and so his kingdom knew a long period of peace and prosperity." He was a great builder of temples, and erected the pagodas of Manorom, Ouposot (with a library which was given the manuscripts which had been brought from Angkor), and Xieng-Kang which was built in memory of his daughter, the young princess Sivayaka, who died of smallpox at the age of twelve. 643* 175* /645 792/

The Three Hundred Thousand Thaïs. In 1376 he gave orders for a general census of the inhabitants of Lang-Xang. The results gave 300,000 "registered" Thaïs, not counting women, children, bonzes, foreigners, slaves and Khas (2), and Oun-Hueun took /53/ 161 175* 654

2. The number of registered non-Thaïs was about 400,000.

/C. A. M. Translator's note. Page 53 is devoted to a map: "Lan-Xang and surrounding regions at the death of Fa-Ngoun (1374)". / as his reigning name Phaya-Sam-Sène-Thaï, the King of the Three Hundred Thousand Thaïs.

Social Organization. These folk then constituted a society grouped by families and divided into Nobles and Commoners. The Nobles were given certain privileges and helped to administer the kingdom, from the dignitaries who were princes of royal blood down to the simple officials who were responsible for collecting taxes, for assembling labor drafts, for transporting goods, etc. 631 565 175*

In the provinces the heads of circumscriptions (Muongs) were elected either from the Nobles or from the Commoners, but the choice of the electors generally fell on the son or some relative of the person who was to be replaced, unless there were some unworthiness or notorious incapability.

175* inhabitants and especially the songs and laughter of the beautiful
114 girls bedecked with flowers. . . . It nevertheless follows from his re-
/771 marks that Lan-Xang was then the veritable holy land of Buddhism
792/ and that it possessed the most highly venerated sanctuaries where priests from Siam and Cambodia "came to spend ten or twelve days to study and receive their grades."

439 For a long time now the rich traders of Holland had been sending
175* ships into the waters of the Indian Ocean in search of cloves, /106/ nutmeg, pepper, silk goods, gold dust and porcelain. In 1641 the mother country had made settlements in Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes and the Moluccas, and its flag was known as far as the seas of China and Japan. Several mercantile establishments had sent out "sub-traders" from Batavia to Siam and to Cambodia. In July 1641 the governor general of Java, Van Diemen, ordered a mission which was operating in Pnom-Penh on behalf of the East India Company to send out a caravan to "the land of gum lac and benzoin." Under the direction of Van Wustof and his assistants William de Gover and Hubert Boudewinsz, the caravan entered the Mekong. The voyage was a long and difficult one, and often dangerous where rapids had to be passed. These men left Phom-Penh on July 20 and reached Vientiane on November 3 after 106 days of effort. They brought a good-sized packet of cloth and cottonstuffs, a casket of emeralds set in rings and small gifts such as brightly colored sampots (?), mirrors which closed like a book, etc... (1).

1. Cf. Cabaton, Le Laos et les Neerlandais au dix-septieme siecle (1913).

A few kilometers out of Vientiane a /107/ messenger from the king came to find out what the foreigners' intentions were and was shown a letter from Van Diemen to the "sovereign of Laos." He was fully satisfied and took them to the outskirts of the city to dwellings which had been prepared for them on the banks of the river. On the following day, November 4, the merchandise and gifts were unloaded. On the 5th the Dutch were received by the king "a quarter of an hour's
/576/ march away from the capital." They knelt down most humbly, their feet bare, striking the ground three times with their foreheads and holding a large candle in each hand, and were welcomed in a tumultuous camp of soldiers, horses and elephants caparisoned with

It was in this holy place that Anou received /164/ his subjects' 796
and vassals' oaths of fidelity twice a year up until 1827. The 643*
ceremony was continued, after his downfall, in honor of the king 175*
of Siam. Nowadays it takes place in April and November of each
year and the oath, accompanied by prayers from the bonzes, is
addressed to the president of the French Republic in accordance
with the traditional formula: "May any one of us who breaks this /695/
oath be devoured by the tiger, may he be struck by lightning, may
his soul burn in blazing flames... etc." (1).

1. A monastery was recently built near the cloister, which 792
has been transformed into a museum. A center of religious
learning has been revived there by the leader of the bonzes
who is presently in charge of it.

Voyage to Bangkok (1825). In the meantime Anou kept closely 643*
informed of the events which were transpiring in the west of the 648*
Indo-Chinese peninsula. In the south the Siamese had come to 175*
grips with the Annamites in Cambodian territory, and in the north
the British in India were extending their sphere of action towards
Burma in a way which was disturbing for the Thai regions of the
basin of the Salouen and the Upper Menam. In 1825 he went to
Bangkok to attend the funeral of king Phan-Dinh- /165/ /Page 165
is devoted to an illustration: "Square of the temple of Sisaket at
Vientiane."--Translator/ /166/ Klang, and there he learned that
a British delegation had entered into ticklish negotiations with the
government of the deceased king and that the intransigence of the
English was causing the greatest difficulties at the court. He profited
thereby in order to ask permission to repatriate to his country the
Laotian families who had been taken captive in the course of the
preceding century, but was given a categorical refusal (1).

1. He was told that the Laotian families had been settled
in Siam for too long a time not to have become completely
Siamese. Cf. H.R.H. Phanuphanthuvongswardja, op. cit.
/Repression de la revolte de Vientiane. Bangkok, 1926./

Hiding his disappointment, he regained his capital greatly dis- /721/
contented. The following year, when the rumor reached Vientiane
that the Anglo-Siamese parleys had been broken off and that a

000 marvelous in its color and animation, which by its novelty and with its long curtain of dark green mountains behind, affords a surprise to the eyes which captures the imagination." "I feel completely happy," he wrote, "at the idea of living in this ravishing corner and confronted with so incomparable a decor" (1).

1. Mission Pavie, "Geographie et Voyages," Vol. VI, p. 32.

175* 648* He was ceremoniously welcomed by the two Siamese commissioners, the governor of Sukhotai and the louang Pitsanoulep, who were responsible for the internal administration of the kingdom, who took every precaution to isolate him from the king, the mandarins and the inhabitants, and who avoided compromising themselves by replying to all his questions that the true master of the land and the only one qualified to furnish him information on his projected voyage towards Tonkin was the Chao_Meun, vanquisher of the Hos, whose triumphant return was imminent.

While awaiting the arrival of this all-powerful personage Pavie settled in for better or for worse, explored the city and its suburbs, visited the pagodas and, in chance meetings and despite the strict surveillance of which he was the object, engaged in intimate chats with the natives whose sympathies he gained immediately by virtue of his delicate /259/ good nature. At their first meeting he made a friend of the Satou (1) of the Wat-Mai, who was greatly taken by

/792/ 1. Superior of the bonzery.

the keen interest which he displayed in Laotian customs and legends. He had only been in Luang-Prabang for a few days when his picturesque figure was familiar to all. As he passed the confused and worried faces relaxed and everyone smiled at him and greeted him with a word, for they were involuntarily attracted, given confidence and conquered...

He displayed such simplicity in insisting that he be received by King Oun-Kham that the Kaluongs no longer dared postpone an audience which they committed the imprudence of not refusing him categorically. On February 15 they presented him to the old monarch who was seventy-six years old, deaf, asthmatic and "in truth greatly weakened." By all appearances the latter seemed to have been given a severe lesson and "to feel great apprehension at the trouble which the arrival of a French agent might cause him, especially at a time when Siamese troops occupy his principality."

779 Buddhism is practiced by the Laotians, the Lus, the Youns and a few Thai tribes as well as by the Khouène and Khmou Khas.-

771 The white, black, red and Neua Thais, and also the Phou-Thais, have generally adopted Brahminic ancestor worship. The Lolos, Méos, Lantène Yaos, etc. are also devotees of this cult, although they have somewhat modified it with certain superstitions.

The Khas of the various tribes profess a kind of ill-defined pantheism as well as the cult of genii, spirits of "Phis," which the other races also observe. Christianity, in both the Catholic and Protestant form, has been adopted by people of diverse origin who have gathered in Christian communities or formed scattered groups in the midst of populations with Asiatic beliefs.

Let us now try to define these various cults and to show how they are understood and by whom they are served.

Religion of the Laotians:

779 "The religion of the Laotians," says the Superior Resident, "is Buddhism. But since there were no Brahmins in Laos whose interest was to see the Brahminic Pantheon supreme, Buddha has kept his preponderant place in the pagodas, whereas in Ceylon and Nepal, the last Buddhist centers in the Indies, he has lost this place and been submerged under and confused with the more ancient gods of Brahminic origin.

• [792] "Most of the Laotian bonzes are completely ignorant of the dogmas of the religion which they blindly and deafly serve. One 779 does meet highly learned ones, however, who seem to have a fairly clear idea of doctrine. Eternal nature, which has existed for all time and forms the essence of everything, is to be regarded as a bottomless nothingness and an incommensurable void. Sometimes however, through the fatal effect of desire, this void takes on an appearance. Thence comes all evil, and thence arises suffering. All the appearances which we call life, sickness, death, and separation from what we love, what we desire and [150] what we cannot have, are so many misfortunes. Now, desire is at the origin of all these misfortunes. Suppress desire and at the same time suffering is suppressed. The path to be followed is a simple one: destroy all desire; detach yourself from the things of this world, and try to raise yourself step by step to a higher state throughout all the successive lives which you are obliged to live in varied forms and which will be all the more excellent in the degree that all the acts, words and

In résumé, Buddhist morality is based on the five following commandments, which are obligatory for all men without distinction: 779

1. Do not take the life of any living being;
2. Do not steal the property of others;
3. Do not commit adultery;
4. Never lie;
5. Do not get drunk on fermented beverages.

It should be noted that these five commandments give rise only to prohibitions, a fact which would seem to indicate that man is mainly inclined toward evil. This is the characteristic feature of Buddhist law; it forbids evil without indicating the means of doing good; it does not uplift the individual morally, but limits itself to preventing him from falling still lower. It acts to preserve a certain moral and social status in which the greater part of humanity is to be kept, under the domination of the bonzes who alone are capable of rising to a knowledge of good and evil.

Despite the purity of its morality and the elevation of its precepts, this religion, which denies progress but from which Christianity has nevertheless borrowed more than one dogma, has not yet been able, after twenty-five centuries of existence, to make civilization penetrate to its faithful.

The Laotian clergy. The Buddhist clergy is composed of three categories of holy men, whom we call bonzes in Laos and talapoins (2) 792 871

(2) From the Siamese word Talapat, a bonze's fan made of palm leaves.

in Siam. These categories are:

1. Boys from ten to fifteen years of age who have entered a bonzery only to learn to read and write the Thai language, and who are called Xieng or Nèn;

2. Student bonzes, called Hatit, who complete their religious education until they reach the age of twenty-two or twenty-five by the study of Youn characters and of Pali, as well as by reading the sacred books;

[161] 3. Last the ordained bonzes or Phra (Phâ, in the current pronunciation) who have pronounced their temporary vows.

There is a well-defined hierarchy among the bonzes which, in terms equivalent to our own, goes from the archbishop to the simple 792

792 vicar and young seminarist. The grades have the following titles:

1. Nèn (student or Xieng). Thi-Houa (Deacon), student preparing for ordination;
2. Tiao-Houa or Pha (ordained bonze or vicar);
3. Samdet or Tiao-Wat (curate, head of a pagoda);
4. Sa (Satouk-Niai), bishop;
5. Khoû, bishop;
6. Thane, archbishop. [Illustration alongside text here.]

There are also bonzesses who devote themselves to the service of the temples of Buddha and are mainly responsible for keeping them supplied with flowers, candles, perfume, etc.

Bonzesses must be at least forty-five years old. They wear white garments, keep their heads completely shaved and take only two meals each day, before noon. They are not allowed to live with their husbands and must sleep on ground in close proximity to the pagoda. They are a kind of vestals, but with the difference that they are neither young nor virgins and that they do not take vows of chastity.

792 The following are the duties imposed on bonzes and the faults which they must avoid:

785 [162] Ask alms each day for your living.

You must always be clothed in your yellow garments.

You must live in pagodas and not in lay habitations. You must abstain from pleasures of the flesh, from stealing, from lying and from murder of any person or thing which has life.

Do not be prideful of your own cleanliness.

Do not till the soil.

Do not destroy any tree.

Do not kill any animal.

Do not drink any intoxicating beverage.

Do not eat rice after noon.

Do not pay attention to songs, music or dancing.

Do not use any perfume on your body.

Do not sit or sleep in a place which is higher than the one where your superior is.

Do not have either gold or silver in your possession.

Speak only of religious subjects.

149: Reinach-121a G-8 (no date) 1901 AMI Indochina
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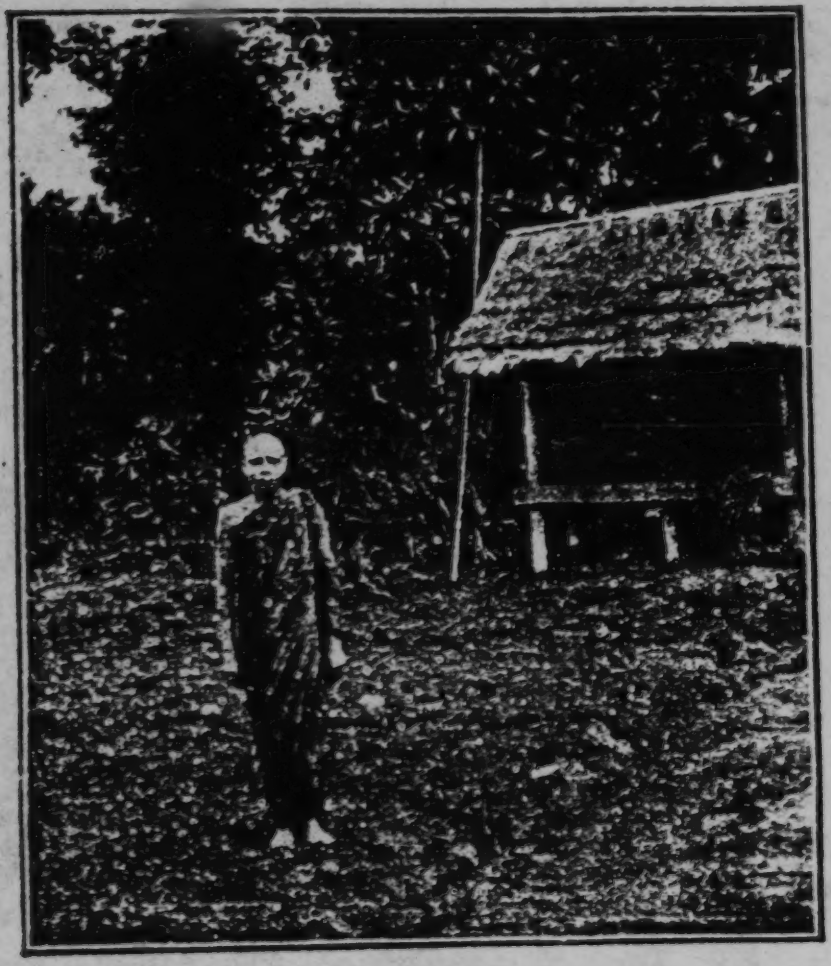

Fig. 42 /p. 161/ A young bonze.

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Do only religious works.
Do not give flowers to women.
Do not thank anyone for giving you alms.
Do not borrow anything from laymen.
Do not lend anything on interest, not even a small pot.
Do not have implements of war, lances or swords.
Do not eat to excess.
Do not sleep to excess.
Do not administer any poison.
Do not give strong medicine to a pregnant woman.
Do not make any incision which will draw blood.
Do not seek any pleasure in looking on women.
Do not sleep in an open place.
Do not work for money.
Do not buy or sell anything.
When you eat, do not make noise like a dog.
Do not sing any joyful song.
Do not play any instrument.
Avoid races and gambling.
Do not judge your neighbor; do not say of this man that he is evil, or of that man that he is good.
It is sinful to do any of the following:
Not to walk through the streets in a contemplative posture.
Not to shave your head and eyebrows, or to neglect your fingernails.
[163] To move your legs when you are seated.
To affect an austere air, to have a more severe air than others and not to make your words agree with your actions.
To receive alms in order to give them to someone else.
To speak to a woman in a secret place.
To mingle in royal affairs, except when they concern religion.
To cultivate the soil; to raise turkeys, chickens, cows, buffalo, elephants, horses, pigs or dogs as laymen do.
To own objects of gold and silver as your private property.
To preach in any other language but "Pali".
To sit on the same mat as a woman.
To cook rice.
To eat anything which has not been offered with hands clasped.

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To dream of a woman and be awakened by the dream.
To covet the property of others.
To speak profanely of earth, wind, fire, water or anything whatsoever.

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Ordained bonzes, like novices and students, shave their heads, eyebrows and beards carefully and repeat this operation every two weeks. Their clothing, which is the same for all and is of a uniform yellow color obtained by means of a jackwood dye, consists of a sarong, a kind of very full skirt which is worn folded in pleats and extends from the waist to the ground, and which is held in at the waist by a narrow sash. A half-tunic passing under one arm is attached to the opposite shoulder, and is split on one side. The whole garment is kept in place by a sash worn crosswise, and is covered with a kind of toga in the antique manner which is severely draped.

Ordained bonzes wear in addition a piece of pleated cloth on the left shoulder on which sacred characters and various formulas are inscribed.

Bonzes obey a code which was brought to them from India together with the sacred books, and a part of which has been quoted above.

The code requires that their clothing should not be made of one piece of cloth which is whole and of full width, but that it be made of unmatched pieces sewn together. Since the code does not in any way specify the nature of the cloth, one sees bonzes' garments [164] of silk and velvet as well as of cotton and flannel, depending on the generosity of the donors.

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Failure to keep the vow of chastity is very severely punished. The guilty person is marched through the village or city and seated backwards on a horse or carried on a wattle while a minor functionary proclaims the fault committed aloud and beats on a gong. Children and even adults utter hoots and throw filth at the guilty party and his female accomplice, who follows a few steps behind him. When he gets back to the pagoda the bonze is degraded from his rank and then handed over to the civil authorities if there are any grounds for so doing (1).

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(1) This custom has fallen into disuse. Faults committed by bonzes are treated much more indulgently in Laos than in Cambodia.

Although less pure than in Cambodia, the bonzes' morals in Laos are generally fairly good. They are, moreover, greatly loved, highly regarded and fondly cherished. When there is a celebration or a great feast in a family, part of the choicest dishes is always reserved for the bonzes.

On the next to the last day of every phase of the moon, the bonzes must make public confession of their faults and be prepared, should the need arise, to undergo the punishments which the code stipulates.

Bonzeries are schools and at the same time workshops where all trades are taught. All knowledge is concentrated in them, as our knowledge was during the Middle Ages in monasteries.

Together with the pagodas, they are also spots of inviolable asylum in accordance with certain rights, and hostelries where travelers are lodged and fed with the produce of the bonzes' alms-seeking.

Newly ordained bonzes must stay in the pagoda at least three months, and may quit their habit at the end of this period. If a bonze desires to return to the pagoda after he has reentered lay life, his reassumption of the habit gives rise to the same formalities and ceremonies as the first time. It is a new ordination.

The liturgical litanies of the Buddhist religion, which the bonzes psalmodize, may not be translated into Laotian. The bonzes and the [165] [Illustration] [166] [Blank page] [167] Laotian faithful, as well as the cantors and the French adepts, chant prayers whose meaning they do not understand (1).

(1) In reality the Laotian, Lu and Youn bonzes form a sort of caste as the Druids used to in Gaul. More particularly, they are the ministers of worship, the repositories of moral authority, of scientific traditions, of secrets and of artistic and industrial methods. They transmit by word of mouth the precepts of Buddhist dogma, which were long ago explained by those who introduced the religion into the land. But the writings in "Pali" which contained these, although they can still be read mechanically by a few scholars, are no longer understood. Thence arises the necessity of handing down their meaning by word alone. Thence also, without doubt, arises the increasingly greater attenuation of the purity and force of these principles as they

149: Reinach--I24a G-3 (no date) 1901 AMl Indochina
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Fig. 43 /p. 165/ A ceremony in the Wat-Si-Saket Pagoda in Vien-Tiane.

779 pass from one generation to another and suffer partial suppressions
778 and numberless interpolations.

[198] The bonzes of our own day do not know the sacred language
792 and are reduced to imitating the "hateful" monks of whom Rabelais speaks, "who neither till the soil nor work, but only mumble a great stock of legends and psalms which they do not understand at all."

792 The bonzes are the ones who consecrate water and prepare with
641 their prayers for the pronunciation of the oath of allegiance which
788 native officials take twice a year to their direct sovereign and, if necessary, to their suzerain both for themselves and for the whole population. The oath consists in reciting the formula and in drinking lustral water in which the candles used for the ceremony have been extinguished and in which the arms of the sovereign have been dipped.

The following is the formula of the oath which is pronounced in Laos twice a year, in the capital of each province, in the presence of the government commissioner. This formula has been in use in the land for centuries and was left just as it was, except for substituting the title of President of the Republic for that of the king of Siam, Vien-Tiane or Luang-Prabang.

Formula of the oath: "I (there follow the names, titles and qualities of each of the mandarins present, each of whom repeats the formula, which is read aloud by one of them, generally the eldest), take an oath of allegiance and offer my life to the President of the French Republic. I give my word before God and before the angels present in heaven. May God and his angels deign to listen to my vows, because the President of the French Republic governs our land with wisdom and skill, follows the ancient customs and protects the bonzes, the authorities and the inhabitants.

"I place myself under his sacred feet, as well as the soldiers and inhabitants who live in my muong, and we all swear him allegiance.

[168] "I ask to serve the administration in the shadow of his sacred feet and to acknowledge his goodness by promising to be faithful and never to revolt in thought, word or body.

"If I show myself ungrateful to, or if I revolt against the President of the French Republic in thought, word or body; if I see or learn that peril threatens the President of the French Republic and remain silent instead of warning him immediately of the peril which I see or know; if I show myself ungrateful towards the President of the

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French Republic, whose happiness and wisdom only grow from day to day, may God and his angels who are present in the air and in heaven punish me, may they deprive me of all necessary things, may they kill me by the sky's lightning, may they strike me with all sorts of terrible maladies, may they cause me to die by the sword or the gun, may wild animals devour me, may I be entirely ruined, and may misfortune burden me everywhere I go or reside. May God and his angels cover my body with sores, and may diseases strike me, and may I die abandoned by all so as to serve as an example to the world; after my death may I be condemned for centuries to the flames of hell, and may nothing enable me to escape these exemplary punishments.

"If after (a thousand years) I am reborn to a new life in any part of the world whatsoever, may I not have an instant of happiness, may I lack everything, and may I never see God and his angels, who will never be able to cleanse me of the fault which I have committed by showing myself ungrateful and faithless towards the President of the French Republic.

"If, on the contrary, I am grateful and faithful to the President of the French Republic, if I never revolt in thought, word or body, if I never ally myself with foreigners to disturb his security and that of his people, may God and his angels who are present in the air and in heaven make me live long in this world, may I avoid all the dangers which threaten me, and may I be exempt from all human slavery; I drink the water of the oath; may peace and prosperity reign in my home.

"After my death, as a reward for my faithfulness, may my happiness continue in heaven in a place where joys and pleasures abound, and may I find myself with God in the midst of his angels. If later on (in a thousand years) I am reborn to a new life, may I be showered with riches, dignities, joys and pleasures, may I obtain all that I desire, may I be exempt from all human misery, and finally may I again find myself in the presence of God and his angels, as a reward for my fidelity and my gratitude, with the President of the French Republic.

"I drink the water of the oath" (1).

(1) After Captain Gosselin, op. cit. [Le Laos et le Protectorat français, 1900.]

[788
641] [169] The formula used in southern Laos is more concise and slightly different.

695 The natives of Laos, whatever their race, have a great respect for any oath and stand in much dread of the consequences of perjury.

Oaths are widely used in courts of law in cases of disputes between individuals. When a judge has reached the end of his arguments and is confronted with a stubborn plaintiff he sends him to the pagoda before the sacred statues to deny the accusation or affirm his statements.

In this case, the above formula is modified in accordance with the needs of the case, as regards the object of the oath and the type of authority invoked as sanction. But the basis is always the same.

As a means of legal procedure, an oath is regarded as an argument of such force and of such grave consequences that it is used only as a last resort. In Laos it is the ultima ratio judicium.

805 The Laotian calendar (1). The Laotian year is calculated on the

[792] (1) Since the bonzes establish the calendar we have thought it well to place this information in the chapter devoted to religion in Laos.

phases of the moon and includes twelve months which are divided into twenty-four half-moons. The months have thirty and twenty-nine days alternately, giving 354 days in the year or eleven days less than in the solar year.

In reality the Laotian calendar is luni-solar, for in order to bring the ordinary year into approximate harmony with the solar year an extra month is inserted every three years after the eighth month, and repeats the latter. It is called the "second eighth month" (Dueune pet song). In chronological dating, the Laotian year begins about the middle of the fifth month (April).

Like the Siamese, the Laotians have adopted a system for co-ordinating and numbering their years which is based on a great cycle of sixty years and two other intermediate cycles of ten and twelve years each. The first of these intermediate cycles is decimal, and the second is zodiacal (duodecimal).

[170] Each year is designated first by the name of the great cycle, then by those of each of the intermediate cycles and by a chronological number.

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wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

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"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists " (4).

(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien. [113]

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Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

[554]

When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring or eyes, or on a phase of the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was unpleasing to his "Phis," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

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Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

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In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

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Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate

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moreover, the object of the utmost scorn on the part of the whole population, and their houses are relegated to points outside the muong, that is to say outside the city.

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No such practice exists in rural areas, and if a few girls grant their lovers great intimacies it is in the hope--a hope which is almost always realized--that marriage will be the result.

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Death, burial, cremation. In principle, Laotians are supposed to cremate their dead. In this they are obedient to the ancient traditions which specified this ceremony, but since cremation is a costly practice poor people are simply buried.

In certain cases, as in deaths resulting from dysentery epidemics, from childbirth, from suicide, etc., the bodies are thrown into the river or its tributaries.

Laotians have no cemeteries enclosed by walls or barriers. A corner of the forest near the muong or village is reserved for this use and serves as a last resting place for those of the inhabitants who cannot be cremated or should not be thrown into the water. There, at the foot of the trees and in their shade, repose those adults and adolescents whose families did not even have means to buy the ritual cremation firewood, and also the children who never underwent the operation of "cutting the forelock" (1).

[881]

(1) This operation takes place at the age of thirteen and marks the transition from childhood to adolescence. It is the sign of nubility.

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When it is to be buried, the body of the dead person is placed in a sort of coffin made of ax-hewn planks which are usually poorly joined and covered with colored paper burdened with ornamentation. Sometimes a mat is used, in simpler fashion, or else lattices made of split and crushed bamboo stalks like those which form the floors of houses. The whole is tied together with rattan or with bamboo bark.

This is the lot of destiny's outcasts. After a few family ceremonies and a feast given in the dead person's home [201]--the magnitude of which ceremonies and feast vary depending on the dead person's station in life and his family's resources--the bonzes, accompanied by a few pupils, come and recite the funeral orisons.

The bonzes are not supposed to look at the body during their prayers, and they hold up a screen called Talapat to hide their faces.

Gifts from the family serve as payment for the bonzes. When the prayers are over, flowers and wax candles are added to the gifts. The body is then raised on the shoulders of four pallbearers of good-will and taken to the cemetery, where there are a few ablutions and where the bonzes recite the last prayers before the burial. 764 792.

When all is done the persons present take turns throwing branches, earth and stone into the grave, in the belief that these things will preserve the deceased from contact with wet soil and the teeth of animals. The grave, comparatively shallow, is dug two sok (.9 meter) deep for adults and a half sok (.65 meter) deep for children and adolescents. When the cavity has been filled with earth and well tamped down with the feet, the persons present withdraw and all is over forever.

No worship will be practiced for this tomb, and it will soon disappear under a thick blanket of vegetation. Relatives sometimes return, however, after a rainfall if the ground happens to have settled slightly on the very spot of the grave. They then fill up the tomb and build a sort of tumulus above it with flat stones or heavy round rocks.

The custom of throwing into running water the bodies of persons who had died as a result of certain diseases, generally of an epidemic character, used to be practiced in Laos before our arrival there. The inhabitants had no concern for the fatal consequences which such a procedure might have on public health. Since our arrival in the land an absolute prohibition has been issued against throwing any corpse into the watercourses. Nowadays the people are content merely with simulating this custom and with interring bodies after a pretended immersion. 766 744

[202] When the family of the deceased is wealthy or even well-to-do, cremation is the standard procedure. This ceremony is not performed immediately after death is pronounced, but may often be postponed for more than a month either to enable relatives to come from a distance, or to await the settlement of a pending lawsuit, or else the arrival of the fire sent by the sovereign if the deceased is a prince, an official or a man of a certain rank. Wealthy families postpone the date of cremation out of ostentation, for the interval between death and cremation is supposed to be filled with feasts, celebrations and amusements of all kinds which are put on almost continuously for the bonzes, relatives, friends, neighbors and [554] 764

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Ever since the death, singers and improvisers of both sexes accompanied by volunteer musicians had recounted the merits, qualities and exploits of the deceased at great length and with emphasis before a numerous audience which remained attentive and never grew tired. They boasted of his good deeds, listed his particular habits and tastes and enumerated his many children and grandchildren.

They dwelled with great satisfaction on the intimacies which he had taken with the fair sex up to quite an advanced age, and in support of their remarks showed brightly illuminated drawings painted on long streamers of glazed calico. These drawings, as much by the truth of the attitudes shown as by their outrageous realism, were the joy of the spectators. Both children and adults roared with laughter as they listened to the highly spicy commentary of the improvisers.

A curious fact was that this exhibition did not occasion any obscene or even suggestive gesture on the part of the audience.

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The bonzes, who are the only art students in this country, are the ones who color these pictures. If published in our own land, the latter would certainly call down all the rigor of the law on their author.

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The day of cremation finally came, and the funeral proper began.

One of the sons of the deceased first set free two pairs of partridges and turtledoves, pet birds which he had had. The poor creatures were unaccustomed to flight and refused to leave their cage, but then beat their wings and clumsily escaped to a perch a few meters above ground on one of the trees [207] in the garden.

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A trail of ashes was spread all around the fence surrounding the house of the deceased in order, as popular belief has it, to prevent his spirit from escaping into the nearby region and tormenting the living.

A solid bamboo stretcher which twelve hardy men would carry on their shoulders was placed on the ground to await the catafalque. Attendance was heavy, and people of all ages came from a distance.

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They wore their holiday clothes with vivid, light and iridescent colors. They wore flowers in their ears and hair and carried multicolored streamers, wax candles and sticks of incense in their hands.

The members of the family, the officials of the Muong and the bonzes were also there in force.

The catafalque was carried from the house by hand and put down on the stretcher, which the porters then raised to their shoulders. At its base, near the feet of the deceased, was fastened a strip of calico

149; Reinach--166 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Since there is not, so to speak, any class of salaried workers in Laos except in certain types of work and in transport by pirogues and rafts, the inhabitants of any given center lend one another their help in farming, harvesting, building houses or pirogues, etc. Taking turns, the one who has asked help of his neighbors will put on a celebration for them when the work is over, and will himself receive an invitation from someone else in return for help which he has given.

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Laotian celebrations, in which the bonzes are never forgotten, are usually given under the verandas of the pagodas or in their dependencies, unless they take place in the host's own home or under sheds specially constructed for the purpose on one side. The latter is always the case in a "Ngan" given for those who have helped in building a house, and the same is true for a birth or marriage.

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Celebrations generally begin towards four or five in the afternoon when the heat is beginning to wane. They last all night and sometimes resume on the following day after the guests have relaxed for a few hours. Some "Ngans" go on in this way for nearly a week and are interrupted only by the coming of the Laotian sabbath, a day of absolute rest when only the preparation of food is permitted, and no work or pleasure. By the light of kerosene lamps borrowed here and there, or of resinous torches, the girls, who are decked out in all their finery, are stationed in a line squatting down against a wall or partition. Before them there are [221] vases made of copper, silver or porcelain. They all pretend to be busy with minor tasks and may imitate, for example, the preparation of food. But in reality this is only their way of keeping some kind of countenance.

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The adults and children of both sexes are massed at each end of the row of girls. Then the young men, their heads covered with scarves, come and squat down opposite the girls and with their heads still covered begin an animated conversation which soon turns into regular flirting. If there is enough space the orchestra takes up its position nearby and in the center, between the young people, are the singers, improvisers and "Kene" players. Cakes, fruit, quids of betel, cigarettes, rice brandy and various condiments are passed around.

Spectators who have not been specially invited come and stand behind the young people, as do passersby who drop in for a quid, a cigarette, a cup of brandy or a bowl of rice, or to listen to the songs and music for a little while.

272 The distillation methods used are good ones, but the equipment used leaves much to be desired and does not make it possible to obtain rectified alcohol of a high degree. By taking 25 or 28 proof native alcohol and distilling it for a second time with European equipment, a fairly good-tasting alcohol can be obtained which is 68 to 72 proof.

389 Powder-making. The inhabitants of Laos make the powder themselves which they use for hunting and for fireworks. They know how to proportion and triturate the ingredients--charcoal, saltpeter (1)

[317] (1) The saltpeter which is collected in grottoes containing calcareous rocks is chiefly made up of masses of droppings from birds and bats. The bat is called "Kiea" and saltpeter "Khi-Kiea," or, literally, Droppings of bats.

and sulphur--in order to make either explosive powder or fusing powder.

792 The bonzes are the fireworks-makers par excellence who make
527 the many and varied fireworks without which no celebration is really
389 complete. Bombs, firecrackers, Roman candles, serpents, pinwheels, etc. and, in a word, almost all the usual fireworks are made using rudimentary processes and local products.

389 The rockets (Bang-Fai) deserve special mention. They consist of a body containing fusing powder, to which is attached a wick several meters long and made of spun cotton or sometimes even of paper. The latter is smeared with mealed gunpowder mixed with gum, and the whole is fastened to a directing shaft. If the rocket is an Aeolian one, its rear is provided with a kind of Pan's pipe made of bamboo tubes which gives forth a harmonious sound as it describes its trajectory in the air.

The rockets vary greatly in size. In some the powder weighs only a few decagrams, and [468] the guide shaft is from two to three meters long. Other larger ones carry a "Mune" of powder (about 12 kilograms) and sometimes more, and the guide shaft is a whole stalk of bamboo some 15 meters long and from 12 to 15 centimeters in base diameter.

Rockets are generally decorated with gilded or colored paper. With the application of rice paste motifs, some of them manage to look very like a dragon with threatening jaws and terrifying eyes, and in these the body envelops the shaft and the head contains the Aeolian harp as well as the powder cylinder. The stands used for launching

175 the fourteenth century. Archaeological discoveries made in recent
177 years in the region of Luang Prabang and more recent ones in the
779 neighborhood of Vientiane may enable this important event in the religious history of Laos to be moved back more than two centuries.

[23] The Pagoda.

346 "Laotians liked to place their pagodas on high points, but their
778 marked taste for the edge of the water made them prefer the neighborhood of rivers. This location of pagodas is a natural consequence of
[792] the relations between bonzes and inhabitants. The former drew their livelihood from the latter, and these are crowded on the river banks."
In principle the pagoda consists of three elements:

346 1) The buildings connected directly with the cult: vat, chapels, libraries; that, standing landmarks and niches;

2) The surrounding enclosures, exterior and interior;

3) The buildings for the immediate use of the inhabitants of the pagoda: monastery [bonzerie], cells for the bonzes, reception halls.

The vat consists of a large hall furnished with a pedestal on which stands the statue of the Buddha often accompanied by a preaching pulpit. The columns and walls are frequently ornamented with paintings.

Among the annexes of the vat, the most numerous are the chapels which are in the form either of delicate buildings or small compound halls.

The that is a votive and sometimes a funereal monument. (See appendix on Vientiane).

The only piece of furniture always found in the vat is the preaching pulpit, an elegant construction, often made of gilded wood. By way of furniture there are a few seats for the chiefs of the bonzes, particularly for the torch bearer. Finally, particularly in the region [788] of Luang Prabang, one finds the hang-lin, a curious spout-shaped object, with elegant decoration, which is used for sprinkling the Buddhas on great feast days (cf. the New Year). These various finely carved objects are usually made of gilded wood and are sometimes inlaid with enamelled lead [24] whose brilliant gleam makes them sparkle. The manuscript chests are usually collected in the [27] libraries, piled up in the shape of an inverted pyramid; they are generally carved and gilded.

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The Laotian Bonze--The Monastic Rules.

As in Ceylon, Cambodia and the other Buddhist countries, the Laotian who enters religious life does not make a perpetual vow. To become a bonze, all that is necessary is to be twenty years old, not to have killed, nor stolen, nor have any skin disease. When he is ordained, the young man agrees to observe the Buddhist rules which are: not to take life, not to steal, not to sin against virtue, not to lie, not to drink intoxicating liquors, not to eat outside of the prescribed hours, not to attend entertainments which excite the senses, not to touch gold, nor silver, etc.

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The bonze's head, chin and eyebrows are completely shaved. In principle he must shave twice a month. The garments of the bonze must not be made of one piece and their color must be yellow ochre or yellow. These two traditions have their origin in the history of the life of the Buddha. When he left the palace of his father, the Buddha cut his hair and exchanged his princely garments for those of a hunter. Now, the hunter was a poor man dressed in rags covered with the yellow ochre dust of the fields. Therefore, since that day, in memory of the first religious garments of the Buddha, tradition demands that all bonzes wear this costome. Texts are not agreed as [795] to the color, the Saddharma-smrtyupasthana sutra giving a whole list of colors for the dyeing of religious garments. We will not delay over the discussions which have arisen amongst the various Buddhist schools over [25] this problem. We will limit ourselves to stating that in central Asia and in Tibet the bonzes wear brownish-red garments instead of the beautiful yellow color of the Laotian and Cambodian togas.

Bonzes get up very early in the morning. Having made their toilet and said their prayers, they leave about seven o'clock in single file to beg for their food. To be precise, we should add that the containers for the alms are usually carried by student bonzes [bonzillons]. After returning to the pagoda they have a brief meal, then they teach [871] the student bonzes [bonzillons] to read and write, while others perform the manual tasks necessary to the upkeep of the monastery. About noon, the bonze has another meal which is the last of the day. He does not eat any food till the following morning. After the meal he [264] must wash his fingers (he eats only with his right hand), and rinse out his mouth. Then he has a siesta, and at the close of the afternoon he works at his tasks as in the morning. In principle he must never go out alone; he is always accompanied by a brother monk to protect him from any temptation.

He[1] must never look at a woman. However a few old women are seen in the pagoda. These are the devotees. They are dressed in white, their heads are completely shaved, and they lead a life of observance and asceticism which is as rigorous as that of the monks. They render small services to the bonzes, decorate the altar, etc., but they live outside the enclosure of the pagoda.

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Laotian Buddhism.

In a recent pamphlet, His Excellency Thao Nhouy Abhay, former Minister of National Culture and Education, wrote: "In its intrinsic substance Buddhism is deeply tolerant, but ours [26] has truly become not austere enough." Therefore he proposes some necessary reforms which would quickly raise the intellectual and moral level of the bonzes in Laos. There are two sects in Laos: the Mahanikay and the Thammayut. The only difference between the two is the way in which they consider that monastic rule should be observed. Nothing distinguishes them in appearance except the color of the monastic robe of the Mahanikay, which is brownish-ochre almost chestnut. The king is the chief of the Buddhist clergy. As for the believer who regularly observes his religious duties, he is satisfied with little and gives much in alms. Buddhist tales and particularly Laotian texts, among them the Pannasajataka (Ha Sip Xat), quote all the merits acquired for future lives by those who give alms and, above all, feed the bonzes.

779 795 [792] 643 [735]

Religious Literature.

The basis of the religious literature of Laos is the Buddhist Tripitaka. These "Three Baskets" contain the integral "word of the Buddha."

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The basket [corbeille] of Vinaya (Vinayapitaka) is the rule of monastic life. It consists of five sections: Patimokkha, Mahavagga, Coullavagga, Souttavibhanga and Parivara. The Patimokkha is meant to be read in public (particularly on the feasts of the eighth month), on the periodic days of confession. The Mahavagga and the Coullavagga give the list of daily obligations, illustrated by examples drawn from the life of the Buddha. The Souttavibhanga is really a commentary on the Patimokkha; finally the Parivara is both a revision and a catechism.

The Basket of the Soutta (Souttapitaka) contains an enormous amount of preaching and of edifying tales. Among others, the famous Dhammapada, a treasury of the sayings of the Buddha and the Jatakas are to be found in this basket.

[27] The third basket is that of Abhidharma and consists of seven

1 [i.e., a bonze -- Analyt]

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[tonques].

The experts throw themselves on the stone, turning it over to see if its underside has been wetted. According to the arrangement of the dry spots, [41] deductions are drawn on the topography of the rice fields which will be flooded, or remain dry, and on the advantage of making rice fields either "high or low."

- This sacrifice of the buffalo is found in the myth of Gavampati the strange monk held aloof by the Buddhist community because he took the attitude of being an enemy of the waters. His death allowed the arrival of the rains.

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Khao Vassa (Feast of the Eighth Month).

This is the date of the beginning of the Buddhist Lent. During the three months of rains, not being able to go from one place to another preaching, the Buddha and his community retired into the park of the Jetavana. Besides the season of rains, as it awakens life everywhere, causes animals to swarm in great numbers. It is therefore impossible at this time of year to travel without violating, at each step, the precept which forbids the destruction of all existence, however infinitely small it may be. Thus, during this period, the bonzes may not leave the pagoda and are obliged to be present at the general confession.

Oldenberg describes this confession according to the Pali texts as follows:

"No monk may miss it. Only he who is stricken with mental alienation may be dispensed.... By the light of a torch, the monks take their places at the place of assembly on low stools which have been prepared for them. Neither laymen nor student bonzes [bonzillons] nor nuns may be present, for the rule of the Order, to be recited in the form of a formula of confession, is considered in principle as a secret appurtenance of the monks only. This formula of confession, the Patimokkgam, is recited aloud by the oldest member [doyen].

"Oh Reverend one, whoever has committed a sin, may he confess it.... After the third time that the question has been repeated, if a monk does not confess a sin which [42] he has committed and which he remembers, he is guilty of an intentional lie. Now an intentional lie, oh reverend one, is an obstacle to religious life. Such are the words of the Blessed One."

Then there follows a list of the sins which must be confessed. At the head of the list are the most serious ones:

796 1. To have had carnal relations with anyone, even an animal.
2. To have stolen the property of others.
3. To have killed.
792 4. To have falsely usurped spiritual perfections, and with the intention of personal profit.

783 Then follows a list of lesser sins. When the enumeration is completed, the reader addresses the monks, repeating three times the following question:

"Now, I ask the reverend ones: Are you free of these sins? And for the second time: Are you pure? And for the third time I ask: Are you pure?" If everyone is silent, the reader says: "The reverend Ones are free of these sins, therefore they are silent, that is how I understand it."

In this way are catalogued in more than two hundred paragraphs, without much order, the precepts dealing with the daily life of the monks, their housing, their food and drink. No detail however irrelevant or insignificant is omitted.

In Laos as in Cambodia "during the entire rainy season, a taper of the Vassa must burn in each pagoda. This consists of a more or less richly carved, painted, wooden cylinder into which is poured virgin wax around a wick" (E. Porée-Maspéro). Before going into retreat, the bonzes are given garments, then the people form a procession and enter the pagodas where they deposit their taper.

196 [43] Ho Khao Padap Dinh--the Feast of the Dead of the Ninth Month

773 This feast is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the waning moon of the ninth month and is accompanied by offerings to the bonzes.

735 A Jataka (Sadhitissaraja) taken from the Ha Sip Xat tells us the benefits acquired by celebrating this feast.

"Two poor devout Buddhist woodcutters sold the produce of their labor and bought two large urns. Into them they put some rice, a few pieces of sugar cane, two bowls, four bananas, some meat and fish, and some delicacies. They offered all this to a bonze on the day of the feast of the dead and vowed to be born again in a better state. As a result of this act of charity they were born again into a royal family. The husband became king and his wife queen. The Buddha then said to those who were listening to this story: "When an act of charity is done for the feast of the dead, one attains three blisses: the terrestrial bliss of being king, the celestial bliss of becoming Indra and finally the supreme bliss of Nirvana."

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Ho Khao Slak--The Feast of the Tenth Month.

This feast is similar to that taking place in Cambodia at the same period. Offerings are made to the bonzes by casting lots. The name of the bonze is written on small tickets which are mixed up in a cup. Each donor offers his present to the monk whose name he has drawn.

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The Feasts of the Eleventh Month.

The Buddhist Lent finishes on the fifteenth day of the crescent moon of the eleventh month. In each pagoda the bonzes recite the Patimokkha, then confess their sins before leaving the [44] community to go either on a pilgrimage or into a rustic retreat for the period of the dry season.

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The Offering of Kanthin. During this feast the ceremony of Kanthin takes place. This consists in offering to the bonzes garments, bedding, etc....

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"When the Buddha was in the Jetavana at Savatthi, some monks came to find him. They were caught by the beginning of Lent and were obliged to stop on their way. When they set out again after the fifteenth day of the crescent moon of the eleventh month, they arrived covered with mud. The Buddha therefore authorized them to accept the gift of garments at the end of Lent."

The Kanthin can only be accepted by a group of at least five bonzes, but the material may not be borrowed of a third or offered on demand. Those who receive a Kanthin must sew its pieces themselves. (Cf. the Laotian bonze).

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The Feast of the Waters.

Other feasts correspond to these purely Buddhist ones. The day before the race of the dugouts the faithful throw into the river small illuminated boats of bamboo or banana wood. Originally lamps were used, consisting of a piece of string dipped in oil, and held up by a banana leaf. This cord was woven at one end in the shape of crows' feet, in memory of the Jataka of the "White Crow."

"A female crow had made its nest at the top of a tree. On the night of a storm the bird died, and its five eggs were carried away by the current. They were gathered by five animals, a hen, an otter, a turtle, a cow, a serpent and gave birth to five buddhas. These buddhas often thought [45] of their mother who was in the heaven of the Tavatimca. She came down to earth in the form of

527 He then places his basket at the base of the pile of paddy and
243 the me-tao come and welcome the rice whose soul the owner of the rice is supposed to have brought back.

The master of the house then brings a straw mannequin personifying rice. Immediately the old women make a bassi before it, and tie white cotton threads to its gilded wrists. They then congratulate the rice on its return and beg it never to leave the granary again.

787 An old man, known for his powers of divination, takes the boiled
527 chicken from the basket, examines minutely its beak and claws, and from signs he discovers in them, reads the fate of the coming harvest.
243 When the prophecy is completed, he slides the entrails of the animal into the stomach of the little straw man as well as all the food from the basket.

527 The Rice figure thus adorned and restored is raised to the top of
243 the pile of paddy whence it will preside over the remainder of the feast.

Before the end of the festival, the wagons are brought out. When they are loaded with the Rice figure enthroned on the first wagon, the paddy is brought into the granaries. When the final load is under shelter, the owner places on its summit the mannequin which, still personifying the soul of Rice [70] will watch over the granary, keep away fire and lightning, and "see that the pile will never diminish or become level with the floor, however many baskets are filled from it."

The master of the harvest is careful to remove a sufficient supply of paddy to last a few weeks, then closes the granary and decorates the door with branches of khoun (to bring luck) and of som seune (gaiety). These will keep luck and gaiety in the house. Hereafter, under no pretext whatever, may the door of the granary be opened before the "third day of the third month," because then "the frog has no mouth and the dragon no anus," and consequently no voracious animal will dare come and devour the harvest.

The Feast of the Khao Chi

527 According to S. Karpelès this ceremony takes place once a year
772 in every quarter of Luang Prabang. It consists of going to the neighborhood of the capital with the bonzes of the pagoda of the designated quarter. A large procession leaves the town, headed for a plateau at the entrance to the forest. While the women are busy with the cooking, the men settle the venerable old men on rugs. The young men and novices cut down branches, clean off the bark leaving a plume of

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leafage, and arrange them in bundles. In the evening everyone returns in a procession to the town, and the wood which has been gathered is put out to dry in the courtyard of the pagoda. A month later, the wood is ready to burn, and another feast takes place at the pagoda. The day before all the women assemble to prepare the offerings of food for the bonzes. They take the wood cut the previous month to cook the ball of rice as big as one's fist on which oil and the contents of an egg are poured so as to form a light surrounding crust. The old people take advantage of this wood- [71] cutting and of its burning to hear additional sermons. The Hit Sip Song Khong Sip Si tell a legend of the origin of this feast, which takes place in memory of an old woman who met a bonze while going to gather wood in the forest. She offered him a ball of rice on which lay an egg. After having done this charitable deed, she was bitten by a snake and died. Since that day the Khao Chi is celebrated.

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[72] ANNUAL RITES OF THE FISHING OF THE PA BEUK

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Every five years the fishing of the pa beuk takes place in five different places. This fish, belonging to the Siluridae family, has a long smooth silvery-white body, without any scales and may attain a weight of 200 kilograms. The five places are Ang (about 25 kilometers upstream from Vientiane) from the 13th to the 15th day of the crescent moon of the 3rd Laotian month, between January and February; at Luang Prabang (in the middle of the river opposite the town) from the 6th to the 7th Laotian months between May and June; at Nong Khieu (about 22 kilometers upstream from Paklay) on the 15th day of the crescent moon of the 3rd Laotian month (February); at Nong Theo (about 30 kilometers upstream from Paklay) between the 4th and 5th Laotian months, without any fixed date; at Ban Seo (about 27 kilometers upstream from Houei Sai) from the 6th to the 7th Laotian month, between May and June.

In the section of the river at Vientiane, as early as the 9th day of the crescent moon, the Chao Muong of the province or his representative leaves the capital to organize the festival. He goes by small stages in a dugout as far as Ang, a sort of wide cove or creek favorable to pa beuk fishing. First the Chao Muong and his retinue stop at Ban Si Khay, "village of the lower orders" ["village de la crasse" may have the above meaning or it may mean "village of filth"--Translator] where lives the village genie who has a wide reputation, and who is continually worshipped by the sorcerers living to the north of the

173: Deydier --59 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

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Fig. II. Bonzes begging at Vientiane (Cl. Deydier).

173: Deydier --60 H.B-3 (no date) 1952. AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

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Fig. III. A bonze at Luang Prabang (Cl. E.F.E.O. French School of Far East).